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(54) **METHOD OF MANUFACTURING
COMPOSITE BOARD**
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C08L 97/02 (2006.01)
C08L 1/02 (2006.01)
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524/14
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**
A composite board is made from waste medium density fiber (MDF) board or waste particle board that includes solid urea formaldehyde. The waste board is chopped and milled into particles having a size between 20 mesh and 150 mesh, creating a waste flour. After removing moisture from the waste flour, the dried waste flour is mixed with a thermoplastic to bind and encapsulate the waste flour. Internal lubricants are added to improve the flow characteristics of the blended material, and external lubricants are added to prevent sticking of the mixture to an extruder or mold. Mineral fillers are added to improve the flexural modules of the composite board, and a plasticizer can be added to improve the physical properties or mechanical characteristics of the mixture. An ultraviolet absorber, a biocide, and a pigment can also be added. The blended material is extruded or molded into a desired shape. When cooled, the thermoplastic hardens to form a solid composite board.

17 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet

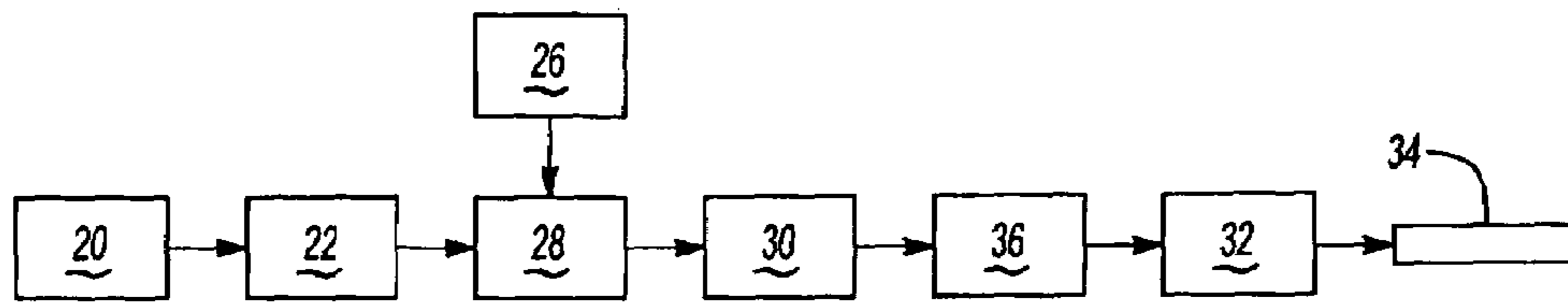


Fig-1
PRIOR ART

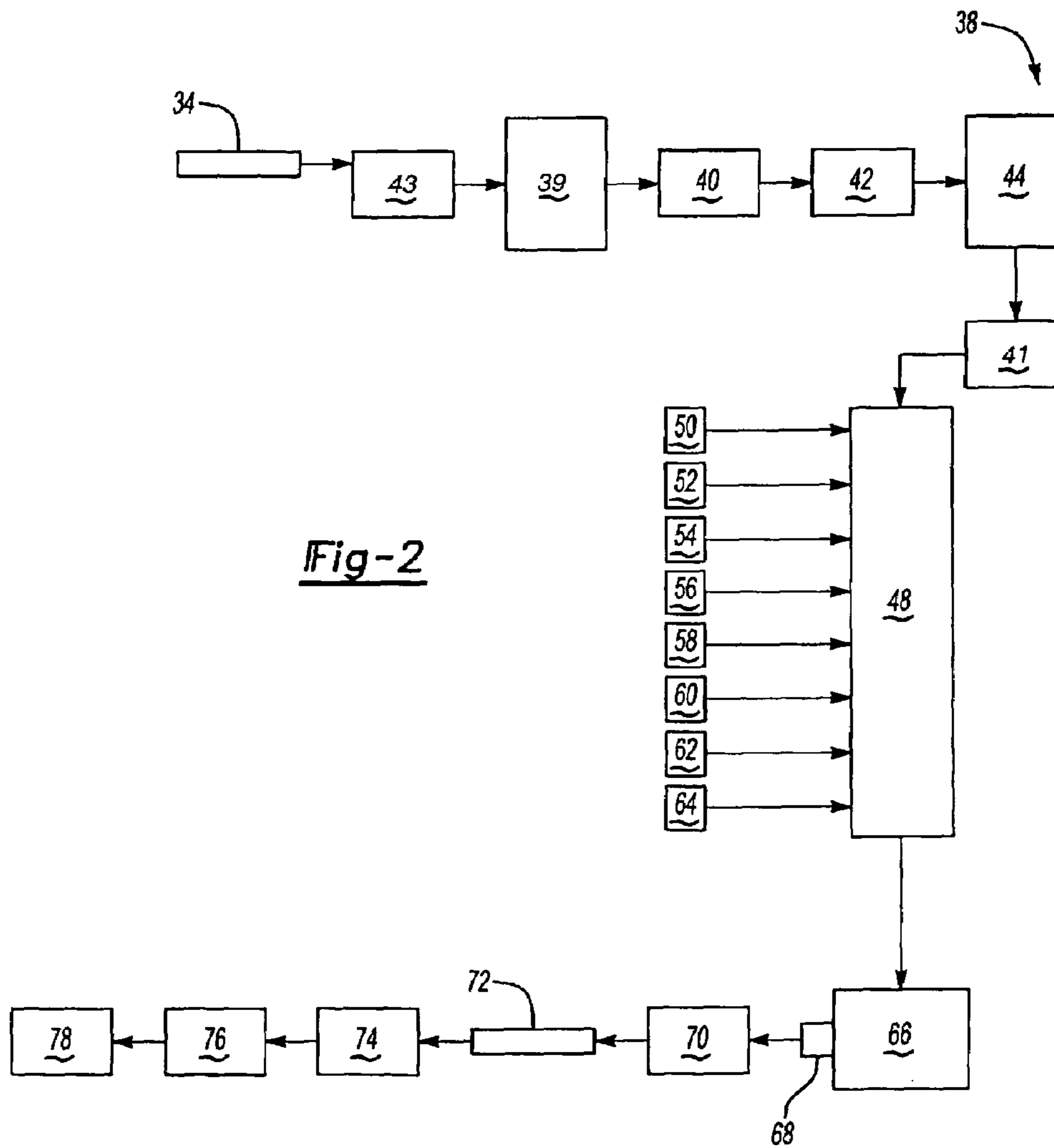


Fig-2

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METHOD OF MANUFACTURING COMPOSITE BOARD

RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a divisional of Ser. No. 10/410,979, filed Apr. 9, 2003 now U.S. Pat. No. 7,022,756.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to a method of manufacturing composite board by mixing wood particles and particles of solid urea formaldehyde together with a bonding agent to form the composite board.

Man made composite boards are made from wood and have the features of natural wood. When manufacturing composite boards, such as medium density fiber (MDF) boards or particle boards, wood is first ground into wood chips of a desired size. In one prior art composite board, the wood chips are then mixed with liquid urea formaldehyde in a blender until uniformly blended. Urea formaldehyde is a thermoset plastic. The homogenized mixture is then extruded or molded into a desired shape. The urea formaldehyde cross-links in the mixture, hardening and solidifying the composite board. The composite board can be coated with polyvinyl chloride (PVC), melamine, metal, foil, impregnated paper, wood veneer that is stained and sealed or polyester to make the composite board decorative and wear resistant and to provide other properties. The hardened composite board is then cut to a desired shape and size, and then further processed by cutting, drilling, or edging to create a component part. The composite boards can be used as cabinets, molding, storage units, desks, or other products.

When composite boards including urea formaldehyde are discarded, they are usually thrown away or burnt and not recycled. In recent years, recycling has become of increased importance due to limited landfill capacity and an increase in environmental awareness. If the composite board is burnt, harmful gases are released into the atmosphere. A drawback to the prior art composite board is that the discarded composite boards are not recycled, increasing the amount of material collected and discarded in landfills and the amount of pollution released into the atmosphere.

Hence, there is need in the art for a method of manufacturing composite board from waste material board including solid urea formaldehyde.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The composite board of the present invention is made from waste material, such as medium density fiber (MDF) board or particle board, that includes solid urea formaldehyde and other impurities. The waste material is chopped into particles approximately one inch in size. The chopped particles are then ground into smaller particles having a size between $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch and $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch. The ground particles are then milled into smaller particles having a size between 150 mesh and 20 mesh. The urea formaldehyde is in the solid state in the waste MDF board, and therefore the wood reducing process also chops the urea formaldehyde into smaller particles of solid urea formaldehyde. The impurities are also chopped into smaller particles. Sawdust waste is also created by the wood reducing process, combining with the milled particles to form waste flour. After reducing the size of the waste material particles, a dryer removes moisture from the waste flour to reduce the moisture content of the waste flour to less than one half of 1%.

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The dried waste flour is then added to a blender and mixed with other materials to form a homogeneous mixture. Thermoplastic is added to bind and encapsulate the waste flour. Internal lubricants are added to improve the flow characteristics of the blended material, and external lubricants are added to prevent the blended material from sticking to an extruder or mold. Mineral fillers are also added to increase the flexural modulus of the finished product and to fill in the voids between the waste flour particles. A plasticizer can also be added to improve the physical properties or mechanical characteristics of the mixture. An ultraviolet absorber, a biocide, and a pigment can also be added.

Preferably, the uniformly blended material includes approximately 40-70% waste flour, approximately 30-50% thermoplastic, approximately 1-3% lubricants, approximately 3-12% mineral fillers, and approximately 0.05-3% plasticizers, ultraviolet absorber, biocide, and pigment.

After thorough mixing, the blended material is extruded or molded into a desired shape. The thermoplastic in the mixture cools and hardens to solidify the composite board. The composite board is then cut or machined to a desired size and shape.

These and other features of the present invention will be best understood from the following specification and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The various features and advantages of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description of the currently preferred embodiment. The drawings that accompany the detailed description can be briefly described as follows:

FIG. 1 schematically illustrates a prior art method of forming a medium density fiber (MDF) board or particle board; and

FIG. 2 schematically illustrates a diagram of an assembly for manufacturing the composite board of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1 schematically illustrates a prior art method of manufacturing a medium density fiber (MDF) board or particle board **34**. Wood **20** is first ground into wood chips of a desired size in a wood reducer **22**. After grinding, the wood chips are mixed with liquid urea formaldehyde **26** in a blender **28** to form a uniform mixture. Urea formaldehyde is a thermoset resin. The homogenized mixture is then molded or extruded **30** into a desired shape. The urea formaldehyde cross-links in the mixture, hardening the mixture into a solid board. The board can then be coated **36** with polyvinyl chloride (PVC), melamine, metal, foil, impregnated paper, wood veneer that is stained and sealed, or polyester to make the board **34** decorative and wear resistant and to provide other properties. The board is then cut to a desired shape and size in a sizer **32**. The board **34** includes approximately 8-15% urea formaldehyde by weight. The board **34** can be used as cabinets, molding, deck boards, storage units, desks, or any other product.

When the board **34** is no longer to be used, the waste board **34** is used to create the composite board **72** of the present invention, rather than being discarded and thrown away or burned.

FIG. 2 schematically illustrates an assembly **38** for manufacturing the composite board **72** of the present invention. The waste board **34** is chopped in a hog **43** into chopped

particles having a size of approximately one inch. During chopping, sawdust waste of different sizes is created. The hog **43** also chops the coating **36** (shown in FIG. 1) applied on the board **34**, creating impurities. After chopping, the chopped particles and the sawdust waste **24** are stored in a silo **39** until needed.

The one inch particles are then milled by a first wood reducer **40** to form smaller particles having a size between $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch and $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch. The first wood reducer **40** can be a miller, or other equivalent wood reducer. The miller particles are then milled into smaller particles having a size between 150 mesh and 20 mesh in a second wood reducer **42**. The second wood reducer **42** can be a miller or other equivalent wood reducer. The sawdust waste and the impurities can have a size smaller than 150 mesh. The combined sawdust waste, impurities, and the milled particles form a waste flour. The urea formaldehyde in the waste board **34** is in a solid state, and therefore the wood reducing steps also chop the urea formaldehyde into smaller particles of solid urea formaldehyde. The waste flour is stored in a holding accumulator **44** until needed.

Alternately, the waste flour is created by wood particles and solid urea formaldehyde to create a mixture of wood particles and chopped solid urea formaldehyde. It should be understood that the wood particle used to create the waste flour can also be manufactured directly from virgin wood trees and other natural sources.

The waste flour has a moisture content between 7-15%. A dryer **41** removes moisture in the waste flour. After drying, the combined waste flour preferably has a moisture content of less than one half of 1%. The moisture content of the waste flour must be kept low. If the moisture content is too high, the moisture will boil away when the waste flour is later mixed with the thermoplastic **50**, creating voids that weaken the composite board **72**.

The dried waste flour is then added to a blender **48** for mixing with other materials. Thermoplastic **50** is added to the blender **38** to bind and encapsulate the waste flour. Preferably, the thermoplastic is virgin high density polyethylene. However, the thermoplastic can also be low density polyethylene, polypropylene, polyvinyl chloride, impact co-polymer polypropylene or styrene acrylonitril. The thermoplastic can also be reground/recycled thermoplastic or a blend of virgin thermoplastic and reground/recycled thermoplastic. One skilled in the art would know what thermoplastic to employ.

Lubricants are also added to the blender **48**. Internal lubricants **52** are added to improve the flow characteristics of the blended material, and external lubricants **54** are added to prevent sticking of the blended material during extrusion from an extruder **66** or molding. In one example, the internal lubricant **52** is ethylene bis-stearamide, and the external lubricant is zinc stearate or calcium stearate. However, any material that provides a lubricant function can be employed, and one skilled in the art would know what lubricants to employ.

Mineral fillers **56** are also added to the blender **48**. The mineral fillers **56** are very fine, combining with the mixture to improve the flexural modulus and stiffness of the composite board **72**. The mineral fillers also fill in the voids between the waste flour particles. Preferably, talc (magnesium silicate) is the mineral filler. Alternately, calcium carbonate and aluminum tri-hydrate can also be employed as the mineral filler. If the mineral filler **56** is aluminum tri-hydrate, the composite board **72** is flame retardant and has increased corrosion resistance.

A plasticizer **58** can be added to the blender **48** to improve the physical properties or mechanical characteristics of the composite board **72**. If the thermoplastic **50** is polyvinyl

chloride, a plasticizer **58** is needed to provide these characteristics. In one example, the plasticizer is dioctyl phthalate.

An ultraviolet absorber **60**, a biocide **62**, and a pigment **64** can also be added to the mixture in the blender **48**. The ultraviolet absorber **60** is used to absorb ultraviolet light. In one example, the ultraviolet absorber **60** is Tinuvin 770 manufactured by Ciba. The biocide **62** is employed to prevent rotting and to resist fungal attacks. In one example, the biocide **62** is Poly Alpha BN manufactured by Towa Chemical or Ionepure manufactured by Wells Plastics LTD. The pigment **64** is employed to provide color. Titanium dioxide or zinc sulfide can be employed as the pigment **64** to provide a white color. Red iron oxide can be employed as the pigment **64** to provide a red color. Black iron oxide or carbon black can be employed as the pigment **64** to provide a black color. Zinc ferrite can be employed as the pigment **64** to provide a yellow color. Manganese ferrite can be employed as the pigment **64** to provide a brown color.

The waste flour, thermoplastic **50**, internal lubricant **52**, external lubricant **54**, mineral filler **56**, plasticizer **58**, ultraviolet absorber **60**, biocide **62**, and pigment **64** are mixed in the blender **48** to form a homogeneously blended material.

Preferably, the uniformly blended material includes approximately 40-70% waste flour, approximately 30-50% thermoplastic **50**, approximately 1-3% lubricant **52** and **54**, approximately 3-12% mineral filler **56**, and approximately 0.05-3% plasticizer **58**, ultraviolet absorber **60**, biocide **62**, and pigment **64**. In one example, the mixture includes 58% waste flour, 31% high density polyethylene (thermoplastic), 8% talc (mineral filler), 2% zinc stearate (external lubricant), and 1% ethylene bis-stearamide (internal lubricant).

The blended material is transferred to an extruder **66** and heated to approximately 300-450° F. to melt the thermoplastic **50**. The melted material is then extruded through a die **68** into a desired shape. Alternately, the blended material can be heated and formed into a desired shape by injection molding or compression molding. The thermoplastic **50** in the mixture hardens and cools in a cooling tank **70** to solidify the mixture and form the composite board **72**. The hardened composite board **72** is then cut or machined to a desired size and shape in a cutter or machine **74**. The composite board **72** can also be run through a die to create texture on the surface of the composite board **72**. The composite board **72** can be coated **76** with polyvinyl chloride (PVC), melamine, metal, foil, impregnated paper, wood veneer, or polyester. Finally, the composite board **72** is packaged **78** for shipping to a customer. The composite board **72** of the present invention can be used to make cabinets, molding, deck board, storage units, desks, building products, such as shingles, or any other product that uses composite boards. The composite board **72** can also be used in interior application or exterior applications.

The waste board **34** used to create the composite board **72** can include trace amount of impurities from the coating **36** of polyvinyl chloride, melamine or metals applied on the waste board **34**. The impurities can be aluminum, antimony, arsenic, barium, beryllium, cadmium, calcium, chromium, cobalt, copper, iron, lead, magnesium, manganese, mercury, molybdenum, nickel, selenium, silver, sodium, strontium, tin, vanadium or zinc. The impurities can also be benzene, carbon tetrachloride, chlorobenzene, chloroform, o-cresol, m-cresol, p-cresol, 1,4-dichlorobenzene, 1,2-dichloroethane, 1,1-dichloroethylene, 2,4-dinitrotoluene, hexachlorobenzene, hexachloro-1,3-butadiene, hexachloroethane, methyl ethyl ketone, nitrobenzene, pentachlorophenol, pyridine, tetrachloroethylene, trichloroethylene, 2,4,5-trichlorophenol, or 2,4,6-trichlorophenol.

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There are several advantages to the composite board 72 of the present invention. For one, the waste board 34 is recycled and not thrown away, reducing the amount of material thrown into landfills. The waste board 34 is also not burned, reducing air pollution. Additionally, the composite board 72 has improved physical properties and is resistant to water absorption. The solid urea formaldehyde in the waste flour improves tensile and flexural strength of the composite board 72. The waste flour and the solid particles of urea formaldehyde in the composite board 72 are encapsulated in the thermoplastic 50, reducing rotting of the composite board 72 and allowing the composite board 72 to be used in exterior applications. The composite board 72 is not treated to with chromated copper arsenate to prevent rotting, which is an environmental and health hazard.

The foregoing description is only exemplary of the principles of the invention. Many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. The preferred embodiments of this invention have been disclosed, however, so that one of ordinary skill in the art would recognize that certain modifications would come within the scope of this invention. It is, therefore, to be understood that within the scope of the appended claims, the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described. For that reason the following claims should be studied to determine the true scope and content of this invention.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method of making a composite material, comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of wood particles and a plurality of solid urea formaldehyde particles to form a mixture;
mixing said mixture with a bonding agent, a first lubricant and a second lubricant; and
forming the composite material.

2. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein said mixture includes 8-15% urea formaldehyde by weight.

3. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein said plurality of wood particles and said plurality of solid urea formaldehyde particles have a size between 150 mesh and 20 mesh.

4. The method as recited in claim 1 further including the step of drying said mixture.

5. The method as recited in claim 4 wherein the step of drying said mixture includes reducing a moisture content of said mixture to less than one half of 1%.

6. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein said bonding agent is one of high density polyethylene, low density poly-

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ethylene, polypropylene, polyvinyl chloride, impact co-polymer polypropylene, and styrene acrylonitril.

7. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein said first lubricant is zinc stearate and said second lubricant is ethylene bis-steramide.

8. The method as recited in claim 1 further including the step of mixing said mixture with a plurality of mineral filler particles.

9. The method as recited in claim 8 wherein said plurality of filler particles is one of magnesium silicate, calcium carbonate, and aluminum tri-hydrate.

10. The method as recited in claim 1 further including the step of mixing said mixture with a plasticizer.

11. The method as recited in claim 1 further including the steps of mixing said mixture with at least one of an ultraviolet absorber, a biocide, and a pigment.

12. The method as recited in claim 1 wherein the step of forming the composite material includes cooling said composite material.

13. A method of making a composite material comprising the steps of:

providing a panel including wood and solid urea formaldehyde;

reducing said panel into particles that include said wood and said solid urea formaldehyde to form a mixture;

drying said mixture;

mixing said mixture with a bonding agent, a first lubricant, a second lubricant, and a mineral filler; and

forming the composite material.

14. The method as recited in claim 13 wherein the step of reducing said panel includes chopping said panel into said particles to establish a particle size of the particles to be between 150 mesh and 20 mesh.

15. The method as recited in claim 13 wherein said bonding agent is high density polyethylene, said first lubricant is zinc stearate, and said second lubricant is ethylene bis-steramide.

16. The method as recited in claim 13 further including the step of mixing said mixture with a plasticizer.

17. The method as recited in claim 16 wherein the composite material includes approximately 40-70% of said wood and said solid urea formaldehyde, approximately 30-50% of said bonding agent, approximately 1-3% of said first lubricant and said second lubricant, approximately 3-12% of said mineral filler, and approximately 0.05-3% of said plasticizer.

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